



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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October 10, 2002

OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK440-3-1

SUBJECT: PGM – Clarification of Program Administration Issues

Purpose: To provide guidance to field offices regarding notification to applicants (that were not approved and developed into contracts in FY 2002) of the status of their EQIP and WHIP program applications. Also, to establish the requirement for gathering cost data locally for EQIP practice application activities and develop local ranking criteria for evaluating FY 2003 applications.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2003

Action Required by November 15, 2002

EQIP and WHIP Notification Letters

Field offices have a significant backlog of applications in both EQIP and WHIP that were not funded in FY 2002. These applicants must be notified by mail of their status in the application process and to determine their desire to continue their application(s) for consideration in FY 2003. Letter templates for notifying applicants of their status with instructions for downloading and using them are available on the Oklahoma NRCS web site. Access the Oklahoma NRCS web site using Internet Explorer and select "Conservation Programs" under the "Quick Links" on the left side of the screen. From the "Conservation Programs" web page, scroll down to find and select "Conservation Programs Forms for Downloading." From the "Conservation Programs Forms for Downloading" page, scroll down to find and select "Filing Instructions for Letter Templates." This will give you step-by-step instructions for downloading and using the letter templates that have been developed for both the EQIP and WHIP programs. This may be immediately accessed under the sub-heading **EQIP** and/or **WHIP** at:

http://www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PGM/html/forms_for_downloading.htm

EQIP applicants must notify NRCS of their intent to continue their application within 30 days of date of the notification letter. Failure to notify NRCS within this period will require the individual to reapply for program assistance. All WHIP applications will automatically carry over to FY 2003 unless the applicant requests cancellation of their application. WHIP is now a Title XII program and all field offices should review and understand the national appeal policy outlined in the Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 510. NRCS policy regarding appeals may be accessed using Internet Explorer at:

http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_440_510.htm.

This information should be downloaded and filed in your local CPM for future reference. All WHIP applications should be re-evaluated to determine if additional environmental points may be obtained using the revised ranking criteria that was discussed at the Farm Bill Programs

DIST: AO

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Overview training sessions conducted in all zones September 10-13, 2002. The WHIP FY 2003 Ranking Criteria has been updated to reflect minor changes for clarification and may be accessed under the sub-heading **WHIP FY-2003** at:

<http://www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PGM/html/WHIP.htm>

EQIP Cost Data Collection

All offices will collect EQIP cost data using form OK-LTP-11, Actual Cost of Installing Practices. Cost data for all cost shared practices completed under EQIP will be forwarded to the Programs Section at the State Office for compilation. An electronic copy of the form OK-LTP-11 may be accessed under the sub-heading **All Programs** at:

http://www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PGM/html/forms_for_downloading.htm

Reporting for all other NRCS cost-share programs will also continue. The Farm Service Agency will be responsible for collecting actual cost data for the Conservation Reserve Program, and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will summarize costs for the state cost-share program.

Make sure that cost-data is expressed in the proper units that correspond to the cost-list and applicable practice standard. Whenever possible, statements from a contractor should split out the cost of varying levels of treatment and should be documented on separate lines on the OK-LTP-11. For example, treatment of high priority eastern redcedar should be separated from either medium or low priority treatment that was applied. If a contractor provides one bill for all treatment levels without indicating the actual cost of each level of treatment, the local field office should prorate the cost to make sure that it does not adversely affect the validity of the cost data.

FY 2003 EQIP Local Ranking Criteria

Field offices will develop their local EQIP ranking criteria for FY 2003 in consideration of the local resource issues identified in the locally led process and forwarded as requested by Bulletin OK440-2-16. The model ranking criteria discussed at the Farm Bill Programs Overview Training, September 10-13, 2002, is available on the Oklahoma NRCS web site. Access the Oklahoma NRCS web site using Internet Explorer and select "Conservation Programs" under the "Quick Links" on the left side of the screen. From the "Conservation Programs" web page, scroll down and select "Programs Training Materials" (just below "Conservation Programs Forms for Downloading" that you accessed earlier). The model ranking criteria may be found under the category "EQIP Training Materials." This may be immediately accessed under the sub-heading **EQIP Training Materials** at:

http://www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PGM/html/farm_bill_training_materials.htm

This opens a fully editable word document that you may use to develop your local ranking criteria. Cut and paste the appropriate resource concern criteria and edit to meet local needs. Try to limit your local ranking criteria to no more than two pages (one page, front and back). Examples of ranking criteria are also available for reference. Local ranking criteria should be developed and forwarded to the Assistant State Conservationist, Programs, no later than **November 15, 2002**, for review and approval.

New program information and other administrative updates will be provided as information becomes available. Additional training will be scheduled and provided when the rules become available for the new programs that are planned for implementation in FY 2003. Please forward any questions you may have concerning the contents of this bulletin to the Programs staff.

/s/

M. DARREL DOMINICK
State Conservationist